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Viewing cable 07HELSINKI553, AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH EU COMMISSIONER OLLI REHN

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07HELSINKI553	2007-07-20 10:37	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Helsinki

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH EU COMMISSIONER OLLI REHN

¶1. (C) Summary: EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn told Ambassador Ware that French President Sarkozy's opposition will complicate Turkey's EU accession bid, but does not necessarily need to derail it if the EU manages the process carefully. Rehn was pessimistic about Kosovo, and very disappointed in the Serb leadership's failure to realize that Russia's cynical handling of the UNSCR process is directly contrary to Serbia's long term interests. He predicted that the US and each EU member state will ultimately be forced to make a decision about unilaterally recognizing Kosovo's independence. EU unanimity on recognition will not be possible, but recognition "by the US and 15-20 member states" will be necessary in order to demonstrate to Russia that it cannot "dictate Europe's security policy." Rehn expressed appreciation for US efforts to promote EU unity on Kosovo, noting that our leverage with Romania could be useful. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Ambassador Ware and PolChief met with EU Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn July 19 on the margins of the "Finland Arena," a gathering of Finnish political leaders that takes place annually on the margins of the world famous Pori Jazz Festival.

MANAGING TURKEY. . .AND MANAGING SARKOZY

¶3. (C) Rehn suggested that Turkey's July 22 election could have an "unpredictable" effect on Turkey's troubled EU accession process. The AKP remains the best bet for keeping reforms on track, and one-party governments -- as opposed to coalitions -- tend to have the best record, both on reform and in managing domestic expectations. One troubling aspect, he added, is that the rapidly growing youth vote in Turkey is divided, and there are no clear leaders emerging.

¶4. (C) Turning to the EU's role, Rehn emphasized that the Council-approved policies currently in place regarding Turkey's accession process will not change -- despite clear messages from President Sarkozy suggesting otherwise. That said, Sarkozy promised the French electorate he would seek to slow or even halt Turkey's bid, and "one should not underestimate his determination" to deliver on them. Rehn outlined one possible solution: The EU may ultimately need to draft new conclusions that allow Sarkozy to say to the French public, "I've introduced 'privileged partnership' to the EU discussion." At the same time, those conclusion's "fine print" would have to include language that allows the Turks to say that if they stay on track, they still have some control over their long term EU prospects. "It's not very elegant," Rehn smiled, "but that's how the EU works."

KOSOVO: RUSSIA'S GAME IS SIMPLE

¶5. (C) Turning to the Balkans, Rehn reluctantly predicted that Moscow, will probably never allow a UNSCR mandating Kosovo's independence to move forward. "Russia's UN strategy is very simple," he explained. "If Kosovo is resolved, Serbia is relieved of the burden of relying on Russia and thus can immediately put itself on the faster road to the EU." Russia is determined not to lose its client relationship with Serbia, and will veto a Kosovo UNSCR on that basis alone. Russia's stance on Kosovo has everything to do with Russia's own interests, nothing really to do with Kosovo, and -- perhaps worst of all -- runs directly counter to Serbia's long-term interests, Rehn continued. Unfortunately, most of the Serb leadership, including the Foreign and Prime ministers, cannot or will not grasp this reality, and President Tadic -- who does understand it -- "doesn't have the guts or the tools" to move Serbia away from

Russia and toward the West.

16. (C) For now, EU unity behind Ahtisaari's proposals has been shaken a bit, but remains intact. However, he warned, if a UNSCR on Kosovo fails to emerge following a brief period of additional negotiations, all bets on EU unity are off. He singled out Romania as being

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particularly susceptible to Russia's shop-worn arguments about setting an international precedent on ethnic minorities, and suggested that the US could play a helpful role in convincing Bucharest otherwise. Rehn also suggested that while Chancellor Merkel remained committed, the German Parliament might move in a different direction absent a UNSCR.

UNILATERAL RECOGNITION

17. (C) In the medium term, Rehn said that the US and the EU still need to try to show the Serbs that Russia is not acting in their country's best interests. However, in the long term, the US and the 27 EU MS will need to face the reality of unilaterally recognizing Kosovo's independence. If, after four months, Moscow remains obstructionist, "we have to be prepared to say to Russia that it cannot dictate Europe's security policy." Unanimity among the 27 will not be possible, Rehn added, but we can still send a clear message to Russia if "the US and 15 to 20 member states" unilaterally recognize Kosovo. EU unanimity will, however, again be crucial on the issue of a post-independence ESDP mission for Kosovo, because "a coalition of the willing with no full EU mandate would be a disaster," Rehn said.

WARE